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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the possible role of grammar throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 in the modern language curriculum where communication is the central tenet. It also discusses how total or virtually total use of target language (German) in the classroom can help deal with the dichotomy of grammar versus communication and bring about an integrated approach, marrying form and function. The paper asserts that grammar can be an integral part of the communicative approach, using total target language skills as the link. It highlights: what grammar means; grammar's role; planning for the inclusion of grammar in the modern languages curriculum; grammar's place in the communicative approach; grammar should always be second to meaning and in context; different learner needs; language chunks versus breakdown; the high or low value of language to the learner; modified language; focusing on form; target language versus mother tongue; the extent to which grammatical terminology should be used; when and how to give corrective feedback; rule discovery by the learner; grammar notes made by learners; learning styles and strategies; revisiting, refinement, and extension; a place for grammar in the four skill areas; a departmental approach; and the department's role. The paper concludes that grammar does have a place in the communicative approach. (Contains 12 references.) (SM)

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MARRYING FORM AND FUNCTION: A PLACE FOR GRAMMAR AND TOTAL TARGET LANGUAGE IN THE SECONDARY MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES CLASSROOM

IVY HOGG

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GRAMMAR

at KEY STAGES 3 and 4

in MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES.

This study was made possible by
THE FRANK CORLESS BURSARY.
I am indebted to The Research and Graduate School of Education, University of Southampton and to the trustees of the Bursary for the opportunity to take a break from the classroom to reflect on my teaching and to offer colleagues my thoughts on one of the most vexed questions in current Modern Foreign Languages teaching.

Marrying form and function:
a place for grammar and total target language in the secondary Modern Foreign Languages classroom.

Introduction.

This paper is an attempt to provide an insight into a possible role for grammar throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 in the Modern Languages curriculum where communication is the central tenet. I will also examine how total or virtually total use of target language in the classroom can go some way towards solving the dichotomy of grammar versus communication and bring about an integrated approach. It is possible to marry form and function.

Grammar provides a tension in the current debate on Modern Languages teaching and learning but it does not have such a bad press as it did when the National Curriculum for MFL was first introduced. For me grammar has always had a place in the communicative approach but in using modern coursebooks I have become much more aware of the need for a department to provide consistent reinforcement, refinement and progression over the two key stages and to decide when explicit focus on form is desirable. The coursebooks, in trying to serve the many differing needs of teachers and their learners at all ability levels, necessarily have a general approach with communication as the central focus but obviously cannot define with any clarity the place of grammar for any individual.

Teaching in almost total target language was the norm for my Year 7 mixed ability beginners and able pupils further up the school so I decided to experiment with the feasibility of using total target language for focus on form too.

This paper shows how grammar can be an integral part of the communicative approach, using total target language as the link; how it is practicable to marry form and function.

What is grammar?

Grammar means different things to different people - word forms, meanings, sentence structure, rules, categories, patterns, grammatical terminology, chunks of language and the breaking down of these chunks, sounds, discourse, the relationship between words and ideas, knowledge about how a language works. I

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shall use the word grammar to refer to all the above that combine to bring about the knowledge and understanding of how a language works. I am not including in the definition grammatical terminology.

Does grammar have a place?

The grammar - translation method, where grammar had a central role, has now been rejected. Having trialled the communicative approach, where meaning is the central principle, practitioners have found that a focus on meaning alone is not enough to ensure the most effective communication. It seems to be accepted now that grammar is an important part of communication and does need to be incorporated into a communicative approach; it is an integral part of language learning. It is now a question of how it should be taught and learnt, not whether it ought to be there at all. Is it possible to marry form and function? - a very vexed question among modern foreign language teachers and theorists.

Planning for the inclusion of grammar in the modern languages curriculum.

I contend that there should be detailed departmental planning for the inclusion of grammar in the modern languages curriculum within a communicative approach and that there should be consistency of approach across the department, brought about by the involvement of all members in the decision-making process.

I have attached an example (Figure 1) of what an overview of Key Stage 3 could look like. It is based on the sections of 'Auf Deutsch' 1, 2 and 3 that our department has agreed to use as a basis for teaching German as first foreign language. New concepts or language are printed in bold, revisited ones in normal print. * show where particular emphasis could occur in the work of each year group on language that appears frequently throughout the key stage. I have divided the grammar into three broad categories: (1) to do with NOUNS - concept of a noun, gender, number, cases, compound nouns, (2) to do with VERBS - concept of a verb, tense, endings, persons, all variations on word order that involves verbs, negation, liking and (3) to do with ADJECTIVES - concept of an adjective, endings, position and comparisons. I have added in the need to examine, with the learners, strategies for learning grammar and strategies for using a bi-lingual dictionary. Once the department has produced such an overview a teacher can see at - a - glance what grammar should have been experienced over the year and the key stage by all learners but that is NOT to say that there will have been explicit focus on form on

K.S.3 Grammar Auf Deutsch : Figure 1.

Year 7.

NOUNS.

- concept of nouns and gender
- make connection between

m	f	n
der	die	das
ein	eine	ein
einen	eine	ein *
einem	einer	einem - with preposition
dem	der	dem - with preposition
er	sie	es

- single and plural
- kein

VERBS.

- concept of verbs
- Present. 1-3 p.s regular verbs and common irregular verbs
- ist/sind
- gehen/fahren
- pronouns. Singular + sie/Sie
- du/Sie
- questions - inversion/was
- nicht
- gern
- ich möchte

ADJECTIVES.

- concept of adjectives
- used with no ending

+ STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING.

+ HOW TO USE BI-LINGUAL DICTIONARY

- for meaning + to recognise noun and gender

Year 8.

NOUNS.

- reinforce Yr 7 work

VERBS.

- reinforce Present 1-3 p.s
- add 1 + 3 p.pl
- Perfect tense
  haben/sein all persons
  strong/weak
  word order p.p at end
  inversion after time
- war
- man kann + infinitive at end
- reinforce questions - inversion
- add other question words
- reinforce gern

ADJECTIVES.

- reinforce use with no ending
- endings in accusative after ein
- possessive adjectives 1-3p.s.

WORD ORDER.

- wann/wie/wo

STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING.

- reinforce Yr 7

+ HOW TO USE BI-LINGUAL DICTIONARY.

- reinforce use for meanings and recognising noun/gender
- idea of looking up key words

Year 9.

NOUNS.

- reinforce Yr 7 + 8 work
  dative case *
  prepositions *
  plurals *
- dative personal pronouns sing. + Ihnen
- compound nouns

VERBS.

- reinforce Present
- Perfect
- Du/Sie
- verb as second idea
- questions - inversion and with question words
- gern/lieber/am liebsten
- war/waren/hatte/hatten
- weil + verb to end
- wenn + verb to end
- können, sollen, müssen, darf ich + infinitive at end
- conditional + könnte, möchte, hätte
- time phrase + present = future
- um....zu + infinitive at end

ADJECTIVES.

- reinforce Yr 8 work
- add comparatives - nom. acc. after ein
- add superlatives - nom after der/die/das

WORD ORDER.

- reinforce wann/wie/wo

DICTIONARIES.

- reinforce Yr 8 work
- add plurals

all of these features.

To help teachers to decide when language needs to be broken down to make communication more effective and, therefore, when the focus needs to become more explicit, I believe it is necessary for the department to provide a detailed examination of each section of their coursebook which will divide the language up into three columns: chunks / partial breakdown / total breakdown. This detailed breakdown helps the teacher in their lesson planning to focus primarily on what the learner is going to be able to do at the end of the lesson and puts the teacher more firmly in the role of 'enabler', not the central focus of the lesson.

I have attached an example (Figure 2) of some early sections of Auf Deutsch 1 for Year 7 mixed ability beginners. The left-hand column, the chunks, would be how the language was first encountered in a communicative context. In the initial stages of learning it would be left like that with no explicit focus on form at all. Quite soon it is necessary to break down the chunk, to break the flow of sound, to substitute other words. This obviously involves some explicit focus but much of the chunk can stay intact and does not necessarily require focus (middle column). All learners need combinations of these two columns. The right-hand column is the total breakdown of the chunk of language with explicit focus on individual words, their meanings and endings, their position and function in the sentence. Concepts appearing for the first time come into this column because they require explicit explanation. Most of this column is for more able learners, but it must be borne in mind that if the grammar has been left implicit, less able learners will find it hard to work out rules and patterns themselves. There needs to be some explicit focus to stop confusion. If their language learning is all chunks, they are faced with a monumental learning task that is unrealistic. Most can cope with some of the total breakdown column. It helps them to make some sense of the language they are practising.

Teachers again have the possibilities there at - a - glance and can 'mix and match' implicit and explicit/chunks and breakdown according to the individual needs of the learners in front of them or the needs of the moment. Sometimes the progression from left to right is quite rapid. In our department, all learners would be exposed to at least some of the material in the right-hand column, once they had progressed through the other two, in order to achieve the correct level of challenge, to allow them to refine their communication and give them the chance to create new language.

Figure 2 : Auf Deutsch 1

CHUNKS.	PARTIAL BREAKDOWN.	TOTAL BREAKDOWN.
3. ich wohne		name + wohnt
in + dative of houses		by gender - parts of house
wohnst du?		der / die / das ein(e)(n)
in + dative of rooms		ich + verbs - e
es gibt		by gender - furniture
	in...gibt es / habe ich	plurals
wir haben		preposition + dative
oben haben wir		ist / sind
er / sie ist / hat / trägt		er / sie
		was
sie haben + adj phrases		ques / statement therefore inversion
hat / ist / heißt / trägt er / sie?		verb + pronoun OR noun
4. ich + daily routine verbs		wann
was machst du?		
time phrases		
was machst du gern?		
was macht + name + time?		ich + er / sie regular verbs
er / sie + irregular verbs		by gender - clothes
	time / place + trage ich	adj endings acc. after ein
	was (haben / essen + per) + time	gern + w.o. (not like book)
wir essen / ich esse / du ißt	(p + verb) + meal / time	am / um
ich verbs for evening		ich + e - er / sie + t
ich sehe gern		
ich möchte		
5.		by gender transport / buildings
		der / die / das / ein(e)(n)
		compound nouns
wie komme ich	die 1/2/3 Straße links / rechts	zum / zur
Nehmen Sie / Gehen Sie		er / sie / es link to der / die / das
directions phrases		
shop conv. phrases	ich bin in...gegangen	im / in der
in + shop	ich habe...gekauft	
mit + transport		mit dem / der
		wie / wo
weather ques + phrases		[fahren / gehen]
areas where live		

In the main body of this paper I put forward various suggestions for methodology, most of which have been tried out successfully in the experiment. Some have been modified after review and reading round the subject of grammar and one area (learning styles and learning strategies) has been added in the light of current research.

The proposal.

I propose that grammar should have a place in the communicative approach but it should always be second to meaning and considered in context. The teacher should decide, according to the learners' needs and the complexity of the language in question, when to leave chunks of language focusing more on meaning or when to break them down and focus more on form, whether language is of high or low value to the learner, how to modify language to make it more suitable and when to correct errors. Since a lengthy explanation is not usually necessary, target language can be used all or virtually all of the time, so keeping up a brisk pace and helping to make a more seamless transition between talking in the language and talking about the language. Very few grammatical terms are needed. The learners should be encouraged to spot the rules and patterns for themselves but the teacher should attempt to intervene at the right time to check that their deductions are correct. If a note of a new grammar point is felt necessary, it could be limited to the rule that has been discovered and appropriate examples all in the target language. The teacher should explore strategies for learning with the learners so they have the best chance of retaining the grammar and then ensure regular exposure to and use of the structures/forms.

Grammar should always be second to meaning and in context.

In the communicative approach the priority is to teach 'natural language for real tasks' (Wicksteed 1991). Grammar appears at the end of the planning cycle instead of at the beginning as in the traditional approach. (See Kathy Wicksteed's 'Grammar in communicative teaching'). The order of the course planning process is: - social and psychological roles - settings/topics - tasks - functions/notions - examples of useful language - vocabulary - structures and communication strategies. Examples that have appeared in authentic texts are the base for the focus on structure, if this is considered necessary for more effective communication. Nina Spada and Patsy Lightbown (1993) concluded that 'instruction which focuses primarily on meaning but allows for a focus on grammar within meaningful

contexts works best', although more research needs to be carried out on how best focus on form can be integrated into the communicative approach. Teachers should not return to methods where grammar had priority since, as was discovered, 'exclusive emphasis on accuracy and the practice of particular grammatical forms does not mean learners will be able to use the forms and does not guarantee high levels of accuracy and linguistic knowledge'. Grammar must remain second to meaning therefore never decontextualised; important but not dominant; an integral part of successful language learning; a means to an end, not an end in itself.

The different needs of the learner.

Learners have different needs, even within a similar ability group. They have varying levels of intelligence, different combinations of intelligences and abilities in the four skills which are assessed in language learning, varying interests, motives for learning the language, strengths and weaknesses. They will also vary in the amount of language they appear to acquire and that which they need to learn. Personalisation of the language will take place in different ways and to varying extents; learning styles and strategies will vary; some will welcome explanations and corrective feedback; some will want to study further, others will be content with G.C.S.E; some will be happy to gain the confidence just to speak reasonably fluently or to understand rather than produce the language. More able learners will appreciate the opportunity to practise their higher order thinking skills and use them in other areas of learning. Some prefer a problem - solving approach, others a more controlled and guided one. The needs of the learner cannot simply be discounted and the teacher has to find a balance to guide them to a better knowledge and understanding. This must result surely in a mixture of teaching styles to suit the needs of the moment, with the learners at the centre of the process and the teacher as enabler.

Chunks or breakdown?

Language is encountered initially in chunks and the decision has to be made as to when and how it must be broken down, if, indeed, at all. If the learner does not need to break the chunk down in order to achieve what they want, it should be left.

In the early lessons questions asking for personal details will remain as a chunk, e.g:

Wie alt bist du?

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No word or ending is singled out for attention because nothing will be gained by doing so.

Mitchell and Dickson (1997) found in their study on progression that 'over time a store of memorised expressions was a valuable resource contributing directly to the development of grammatical control' and that 'chunks may contribute directly to the growth of target language grammar through processes of analysis and breakdown'. Learners need to have the freedom to create language that is appropriate to new contexts and to what they want to convey. Mitchell and Dickson (1997) state that 'the key role for chunk breakdown in the early development of target language grammar is driven by the communicative need to adapt memorised phrases to changing conversational topics (see partial breakdown column).

In later lessons hobbies are learned initially as sentence chunks:

ich spiele Fußball / ich lese Bücher / ich gehe in die Stadt.

Once the sentence chunks have been learned, they can be broken down into smaller chunks of meaning, so that one chunk, often at the end, can be replaced by another. The stream of sound is broken. Learners realise where one chunk ends and another begins.

ich spiele / Tennis; ich lese / Comics; ich gehe / ins Kino.

After surveys have been done of classmates' interests and the need to report back the findings becomes important, the chunk containing the subject and the verb will become the focus, as the person and the verb ending change. It is not enough any more just to focus on a chunk.

Ich becomes er or sie and the 'e' verb ending is replaced by 't'.

The breakdown has not just gone as far as a focus on a single word but even further to a splitting up of that single word. The breakdown has only happened as it has become necessary for accurate meaning and communication and so that new language could be created.

If some children find it difficult to remember the rule that has been spotted they will perhaps be able to remember and repeat some of the sentence chunks they have heard in the report back:

er spielt Rugby / sie hört Musik.

Explicit focus on form accompanies breakdown and this explicit focus will greatly economise the learners' time and effort. At some point it is also surely helpful to guide learners towards categorising what they have learnt. Otherwise as Kathy Wicksteed (1989) points out 'they have to learn everything 'by heart', greatly increasing the burden on their memory'. Could this overburdening lead, in extreme cases, quite simply to a lack of access to the language for certain learners? The less able learner is not going to be able to learn the whole range of hobby sentences again in the 3rd person and without explicit focus the difference in meaning and form between the 1st and 3rd persons will not be very clear.

High or low value language?

Teachers have to decide whether language, for example, vocabulary, verb forms or chunks of language, has a high or a low value for the learner. Grenfell (1991) talks about 'the value of individual components of language'. If it has a high value, i.e. is commonly found or facilitates communication in many contexts, then learners need to revisit it frequently, to meet and use it in an ever-widening range of contexts to ensure it has been internalised.

Examples of high value language would be:

verbs like sein / haben / gehen,

some parts of verbs - the singular persons are more common than the plural ones

(ihr is probably the lowest value of all the persons for the learner's use)

es gibt / man kann / darf ich / ich möchte.

Low value language which occurs less frequently or does not have so many applications would not be emphasised to the same extent. A well-learnt collection of high value phrases, however small but consistently recycled, can go a long way to bringing confidence and success, particularly for less able learners or beginners. As Grenfell (1991) points out: 'more will come when needed and as an act of refinement'. However, it is equally important with all abilities, as with beginners or more practised users, not to underestimate what they can cope with. Teachers must start from the idea that learners 'can do' and also 'want to'. Most learners want to learn and want success, although they may not always know how to achieve it.

Modified language.

Lightbown and Spada (1993) state that 'language which is modified to suit the capability of the learner is a crucial element in the language acquisition process'. Teachers should ask themselves 'is the language at the appropriate level of difficulty?' 'What about the speed, the complexity of structure, and vocabulary?'

More able learners might cope with:

'Wie komme ich am besten zur Post bitte',

while the less able might prefer:

'Wo ist die Post' bitte?

More able:

'Deutsch gefällt mir gut'

less able:

'ich lerne gern Deutsch' or just ' Deutsch ist toll'.

A note of warning though: too easy can be as harmful as too difficult; the level always needs to just challenge them sufficiently to want to develop further. If the level is right there will be sudden bursts of progress or there will be back-sliding if it suddenly incorporates too much or the wrong things (see Lightbown and Spada 1993). Much of the language in the modern coursebooks, as well as that in teaching programmes on television, video and CD-Rom, although provided by native speakers, has already been modified so that it is suitable as a teaching tool.

Teachers need to simplify language even further for instruction or explanation in the classroom. Instructions, requests, warnings etc in the classroom can on occasions be simplified just to key words often accompanied by gestures, e.g:

James, die Tür, bitte - gesturing at the open door will result in its closure.
Sarah, nicht so laut - with finger over lips will reduce noise.
David, dein Stuhl, bitte - with gesture, will result in all four legs touching the floor again.

However it is worth remembering that learners need access to authentic material and to proficient-user language from their teacher too, so that their innate device for acquiring language is triggered.

How grammar is incorporated into language learning is a much more important question than whether it ought to be incorporated. It may be acquired unconsciously or learnt consciously; it may be left implicit in a scheme of work or have explicit focus. Learners are exposed to a large amount of material in the target language, including the 'competent-user' language of their teacher as well as many helpful reference sources. These enable them to acquire unconsciously some idea of the structure of the language and maybe some idea of particular forms. Some grammar will be 'picked up' without consciously focusing on form.

I would contend that it is helpful on occasions to focus explicitly on form but that this should usually be done as demonstration, exemplification or description and only rarely as explanation. Many features do not have detail to give and will not be made clearer by lengthy discussion or notes. Explicit focus on form need not take up much time and, if long mother-tongue explanations are avoided, need not interrupt the flow of the lesson. It must be simple, clear and concise. As Forth and Naysmith (1995) point out: 'certain rules (rules as instruction) simply tell the learner what to do in certain predictable circumstances and there is no point in asking why or trying to explain'.

Explanation is not required and is impossible to give anyway in instances such as verb endings in the present tense. When ich - e has been met and practised sufficiently, examples can be written on the board with the 'ich' and 'e' highlighted. If, at the end of a period of time, after the 3 singular persons had been practised horizontally and each focused on in turn, a vertical summary was thought necessary, explanation is still not required. Having written on the board all but the endings, the teacher elicits them from the class - was kommt hier?

and fills them in:

ich spiele
du spielst
er spielt
sie spielt

Whilst pointing at the completed examples, the teacher can be reinforcing ich + Verb mit 'e' am Ende etc.

The same is true, for example, for an infinitive at the end of the sentence after a modal verb. The teacher does not need to explain, simply to illustrate. On the board

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are examples relevant to the context in question:

man kann einkaufengehen
man kann Tennis spielen
man kann im Freibad schwimmen

with the infinitive somehow highlighted and the teacher's verbal reinforcement at the same time : 'Infinitiv am Ende'. This all happens very quickly.

The teacher only needs to explain (rules as explanation) in 'an attempt to make clear the purpose of grammatical forms, to describe the circumstances in which a structure is or is not appropriate or to pinpoint the meaning of a structure in relation to similar or overlapping areas of meaning'.

For example, in the case of some tense usage, explanation, probably in English, is necessary, e.g. with the German 'Imperfekt' where the usage does not correspond exactly with the English or French Imperfect tenses. Confusion often occurs for dual linguists when they have met the French first. Ways of expressing the future also need to be considered carefully.

Canadian research (Spada 1993) has shown that 'learners can benefit from and sometimes require explicit focus on the language which does not necessarily involve giving explicit explanations or getting learners to explain why; indeed learners continue to have difficulty with basic structures of the language if there is no form-focused instruction at all'.

Since secondary school learners are having to cope in a language classroom and not a native speaker environment, which places a time limit and assessment requirements on their language learning, a focus on grammatical features would seem to benefit them by enabling them to perceive patterns and extract meaning more quickly. It should also serve as confirmation of the patterns they have identified unconsciously or as a trigger to readjust their perceptions.

The focus on grammar should always be in context and aimed at encouraging them along the path towards more effective communication, not inhibiting them in their production of the language. A particular focus will undoubtedly lead to improvements at the time but, if the gains in knowledge and understanding are to be maintained, the features must be revisited regularly, possible only implicitly

after a while if the teacher is satisfied that they have been learnt and internalised. Kathy Wicksteed (1989) argues that there is no dividing line between explicit and implicit teaching of grammar points; it is a continuum. Teachers use different approaches, even with the same class, depending on the needs of the moment. Explicit grammar teaching has a role but not everything needs to be taught. Even if it has been taught, this does not necessarily mean it has been learnt. According to the research of Mitchell, Hooper and Brumfit (1994) 'foreign language pupils believed that systematic practice on relatively micro-aspects of the language was necessary for success'.

Learners, other than the most able, do need the reassurance brought about by manipulative practice of specific structures before they feel ready to take risks and be more adventurous in their language use. No explicit focus at all would leave many learners in a fog. If further practice is taking place after a rule has been discovered and learners are manipulating the language according to a mathematical-type formula, care must be taken to ensure that this is part of a broader language - learning experience with plenty of opportunities to use the language communicatively.

Target language or mother tongue?

Teachers are divided on the issue of how much instruction should be in the target language, often preferring to have the decision left to their own professional judgement. Many believe that focus on grammar points needs to be in the mother tongue to be clear and therefore properly understood and subsequently remembered. I am convinced that grammar can be taught almost totally in the target language and that too much English is actually counterproductive. The only possible reasons for using English would be to check in the early stages of language learning that concepts such as noun, verb, adjective, gender and number had been understood, to provide an explanation for a grammar point where demonstration and exemplification were not sufficient (see Focus on form section) or to give a brief word of clarification or confirmation, probably in the middle of a target language sentence. In the case of concepts and explanations, target language can be used alongside mother tongue on the first occasion so that it may prove possible to use target language only on subsequent occasions when reinforcing. The occasions when English is really necessary in a secondary school language learner's classroom life are rare.

Some teachers feel that using target language solely or mainly with less able classes or with Key Stage 4 classes is more of a hindrance than a help but I would argue for the same basic approach with any class, as long as the teacher has made all the decisions on 'how' (as discussed in other sections) so that the needs of the learners in front of them are best served. If teachers use target language as the sole/main means of instruction, they give their learners maximum exposure to the language they are trying to learn in far - from - ideal conditions. They give them modified language at a suitable level to reassure them that they can understand and respond but, as the only competent user to whom the learners have access, the teacher also provides extended, more complex language which helps to develop their listening skills. It may enable some to begin unconsciously to perceive patterns in the structure of the language that they will later be able to use in their own production. By gradually building up their use of the target language the teachers prove to the learners that virtually all interactions are possible in the language.

Since explanation is needed only rarely and demonstration/exemplification are the norm when explicit focus on form is felt to be necessary, target language, accompanied by visuals/actions is the quickest and simplest way to approach or revisit the point, ensuring that the brisk pace necessary to maintain interest and motivation is not lost and that long-winded English explanations are not placing a burden on memory alongside the learning of the feature in question. Many learners switch off when what looks like an explanation appears, especially if it is signalled by use of English. Touching on the point briefly but regularly in the target language if it is high - value language will be much more effective for their target language learning, cutting out unwelcome interference from the mother tongue and bringing them more success which, in turn, will continue to increase motivation. Lapsing into English frequently heralds ever-diminishing use of target language by the teacher. Explanations are soon forgotten by the majority of learners. What have they left then? No success and very little target language. Staying in target language hides to a certain extent that they are 'doing grammar'; the word has negative associations for many learners.

All learners need to be challenged if teachers are to raise standards and levels of enjoyment and success; language learning itself provides challenging content; target language use provides challenging medium too, for the teacher as well as the learner, since language and communication are living, dynamic, ever-changing. Knowledge and understanding of the target language and its grammar is part and parcel of the communication process and tackled in this way can go some way

towards marrying form and function.

To what extent should grammatical terminology be used?

In the secondary modern foreign languages classroom with a policy of Modern Languages for All, the emphasis has to be on communication, fluency, enjoyment and success. A small minority do not want to be part of the foreign language learning process and require constant re-motivating; the majority want to learn the language; relatively few will continue their study beyond G.C.S.E, which perhaps would require more knowledge of grammatical terminology. Is the aim of MFL departments with learners in this age range to furnish their learners with another 'foreign language' to describe the one they are meant to be learning?

As Heafford (1993) says: 'the ultimate goal of the language teacher is to enable learners to learn the language and not to describe it'. If terminology is taught the learner will feel obliged to learn these terms as well as the language and there is a danger that they will be seen as an end in themselves. More able learners may wish to have a selected few at their disposal for quick and easy reference when needing to confirm or clarify their perceptions of a rule with the teacher or to help with their independent use of the dictionary or the reference grammar at the back of their course book. A carefully chosen few, in target language, should suffice: Hauptwort, Verb, Adjektiv, Maskulinum, Femininum, Neutrum, Einzahl, Plural, Präsens met in Year 7 when the concepts were introduced in mother tongue and target language; Hilfsverb, Partizip, Infinitiv, Perfekt, Futur in Year 8 as other tenses are introduced and maybe Imperfekt and Dativ in Key Stage 4. Since these terms may not actually help them to process the language they are learning, they should be kept to a minimum but used on subsequent occasions when the needs of the learner so dictate.

Using the English terms is not in itself helpful since most learners and the younger generation of teachers have not studied grammar at a sentence or sub-sentence level in their mother tongue and the young teachers may not themselves have received form-focused instruction in their foreign language learning. Certain concepts may not be the same in the two languages and using just the foreign language names does not invite comparison with the English so easily. Learners will gain most benefit from having a consistent approach from all members of the modern languages department, part of which could be based on a list of the target language terms considered most necessary. At this stage some knowledge and understanding

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about how the language works is necessary for every learner. Knowing the correct grammatical terms does not enhance the processing of the language and may detract from it for the majority.

Corrective feedback.

Whether, when and how to give corrective feedback on grammatical features is a difficult problem facing modern languages' teachers. Will the correction always move the learner forward in some way? Will it encourage them to develop their language learning further or will it inhibit them and make them feel that they are always getting things wrong? - it is a very fine line that teachers tread. It is important to realise that, as Selinker (1972) states; 'interlanguage (a learner's emerging, developing language that has not yet reached proficient - speaker level) is not an incorrect version of proficient - speaker language, but a system in its own right. The child will revise and develop it as it is exposed to native speaker language'. However, the secondary foreign languages' learner will probably require a little assistance since they are not in a native speaker environment. Mitchell and Dickson (1997) found that 'certain types of mistakes are developmentally unavoidable as the complexities of grammar are gradually sorted out over time'. In their desire to create language for their own purposes, learners may try to over-extend a known structure or apply inappropriately a known set of endings. Mistakes do not always interfere with the meaning, nor are they necessarily signs of a failure to learn. Maybe a feature was highlighted for which the learner was not cognitively ready and was therefore unable to take it on board. The errors may simply be evidence of which point the developmental interlanguage has reached. Errors should make it clear to the teacher where the learner is and therefore what needs to happen next; they should not induce guilt or inadequacy on the part of the learner.

Lightbown and Spada (1993) conclude that 'errors are a natural and valuable part of the learning process', but 'too much freedom without correction and explicit instruction will lead to early 'fossilisation' of errors'. They also conclude that a focus on language can change interlanguage. Therefore some correction, done at the right time in a non-threatening way, is beneficial.

In oral work, when manipulation of a certain structure is being practised and the focus is concentrated on one small area, I suggest that the teacher could correct any error on the particular point in question and expect the learner to repeat the correction.

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If during manipulation practice of the 1st person singular of the Perfect tense the focus was on the correct form of the correct auxiliary verb and the correct form of the past participle and the learner was trying to produce - ich bin mit dem Auto nach Frankreich gefahren,

ich habe mit dem Auto nach Frankreich gefahren or
ich bin mit dem Auto nach Frankreich fahren

could be corrected by the teacher and then repeated by the learner.

If, in this type of task, the error was made outside of the focus, the teacher could simply repeat the utterance correctly. So:

ich bin mit Auto nach Frankreich gefahren or
ich bin nach Frankreich mit dem Auto gefahren

could be corrected by the teacher without repetition by the learner.

In both cases praise would be given initially and correction afterwards.

If it were a question of creative use of language where the focus was not on one specific point, e.g. production of a playlet, it would be inappropriate to correct, certainly during the performance, but probably at the end too. If a common error were evident after several groups had performed, then it could be addressed in summary. Although important, this should not be time-consuming and certainly not cause a feeling of negativity in the class.

With regard to written work, the same kind of criteria can be applied. In a manipulation task errors in the main focus can be singled out for correction; in a longer, more creative piece, where it is a question of more independent and complex language, a few can be selected for remedial attention, depending on the criteria set out initially for the completion of the task, of which the learners are fully aware. More able learners producing this type of writing may benefit from having the selected errors pointed out, not actually corrected. If misunderstanding or misapplication of a particular point occurs frequently, a correct example or reiteration of the rule in target language can be written at the bottom. Ideas on how to move the work forward are usually welcomed, but in English. As with the oral work, praise for what has been achieved comes first and, only after that, any correction that is felt to be necessary and useful.

When producing language, particularly writing, learners tend to have access to support which varies from chunks to dictionaries, independent notes to tips and a

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collaborative rule on the board to a grammar section in their coursebook. If used properly, this should ensure fairly accurate production. Also, if the teacher has gauged correctly where the learners are in their learning and gives plenty of manipulative practice at the right level, hopefully correction will not have too big a role and feedback will be seen as constructive and helpful.

Rule discovery by the learners.

Vee Harris (1997) states that 'there is a growing concensus that. at some point, once the learners have been exposed to the language within a communicative context and have practised it, they should be asked to deduce the rules and learn them'. Since the introduction of the communicative approach, the language learning process has not begun with rule-giving by the teacher which would then be followed by learning, practice and possible application to some fairly meaningless context. The more experiential approach puts focus on form/structure at the end of the learning cycle, if anywhere (see Figure 3), and also gives the learner the chance to absorb the features of a language that cannot be summarised by a rule.

Figure 3.

Typical Planning and Learning Cycle: Year 8 - Perfect Tense.
Context : Holidays.

Listening/Reading Texts
select a structure
check meaning
oral manipulation
make support evident
rule discovery check
widen contexts
written manipulation
noting down of grammar

With a complex grammar point the mini-cycle is repeated several times over but shows the same basic pattern as the overall cycle. The last steps are added as and when appropriate.

The word 'rule' has negative associations for many people, not just language learners, but Lightbown and Spada (1993) show that 'language development is not just adding rule after rule but integrating new rules into the existing system of rules, re-adjusting and restructuring until all the pieces fit. (See Figure 4 for the gradual emergence of a formula for a complex feature).

Most learners will acquire some of the rules of language use from their exposure to the target language but, since they are not in a native-speaker environment and time and achievement are of the essence, it is perhaps wise for the teacher and the rest of the class to intervene at the end of the learning cycle to confirm that what has been deduced is correct, to add to what has been deduced or to modify any incorrect deductions, what Forth and Naysmith (1995) refer to as 'collaborative sense-making within the class'.

The discovery process and the final focus on the findings need not take up much time or effort and can be done in target language, avoiding long-winded explanations, if the teaching materials have been carefully chosen, the methodology, which makes evident the important features, carefully suited to the learners and the questions that will elicit their discoveries carefully thought-out.

When features have been met and practised in context and the teacher is trying to elicit rules sometimes mathematical - type formulae are an easy and popular reminder, e.g:

wenn + Verb am Ende
ich muß + Infinitiv am Ende
wann + Präsens + Person + Rest = Futur
Verb mit -st + du + Rest = ? Frage.

If, during the sense-making process, learners wish to comment or question further and have not got the necessary target language, mother tongue may be used but it is possible to develop simple target language for such an occasion, especially since the interested parties are likely to be more able. Because learners do not necessarily apply rules that are well-known to them and constant revision is needed, revisiting of high-value language features, once discovered, should occur regularly (see 'High or low value language?' section).

Mitchell, Hooper and Brumfit (1994) state that 'most language development will rightly continue to take place primarily through practice and experience of

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Rule discovery in the introduction of the Perfect Tense : Figure 4.

Context: Holidays.

Listening + Reading texts on past holidays

ich bin + wo gefahren

ich bin + wie gefahren

ich bin + wie + wo gefahren

Further Listening + Reading texts

ich bin + wann + wie + wo gefahren

introduction of other past participles

ich bin + wann + wie + wo + Partizip = Perfekt

Further Listening + Reading texts

ich habe with strong + weak verbs separately

simple writing introduced

other contexts added

ich bin } + wann + wie + wo + Partizip = Perfekt

ich habe }

Questions (du)

Interviews/surveys (du/ich)

Report back (er/sie)

* **Person + Hilfsverb + wann + wie + wo + Partizip = Perfekt**

longer pieces of writing on various contexts

Further Listening + Reading texts especially diaries

1st and 3rd persons plural

oral + written tasks

* **Wann + Hilfsverb + Person + wie + wo + Partizip = Perfekt**

widen contexts

more detailed, more creative Speaking + Writing

Noting down of grammar at end of cycle

* These two summary rules were the only ones to be learnt

language use BUT a more consistent sharing of KAL (Knowledge About Language) frameworks and analytical tools will help pupils to become more mature and self-aware users, controlling a range of stylistic choices'. One of the G.C.S.E criteria is to promote learning skills of a more general application. If a problem-solving approach to language learning is taken, incorporating opportunities for analysis, reflection, synthesis, prediction, conjecture and isomorphism, for example, it will provide learners with skills which are useful across the curriculum and for later study, and will hopefully persuade the control freaks amongst language teachers to let go a little.

Grammar notes made by learners.

It is fairly common practice for learners to make notes on grammatical points (or be given ready - made sheets) at the end of the learning cycle. These are often provided by the teacher and vary from long explanations in English to frequently meaningless whole verb paradigms or examples in the target language which may or may not be translated into English alongside. How much of it is actually useful in furthering the language learning process and effective communication long-term?

Some of the new coursebooks provide grammar worksheets on a particular feature with a framework containing gaps for the learner to complete when they have discovered the rule. The format is readily accessible, they are popular and can be used to encourage independent reflection and then verified with the class and the teacher. The problems are that they only cover certain points and storage is difficult, so many are mislaid before they can be revisited on subsequent occasions.

Learners know they will probably be asked to learn the feature in question and the more able welcome a written note to refer to but noting it down often involves the sudden appearance of grammatical terminology in English and/or target language which has not been referred to during the learning cycle. Conscientious or more able learners are tempted to spend time learning the terminology and the explanations as an end in themselves when, in fact, they are unlikely to enhance the language processing. Some learners feel successful when they have learned the notes, only to be disappointed later when they realise they cannot apply the rules and they have not added to their ability to communicate spontaneously in speech but the notes may have helped a little with writing. The less able will not even try to tackle the notes. Perhaps more useful would be a statement of the rule followed

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by examples of how the feature is used in context. These can be added to as rules are refined and extended at a later date. Attempts to explain frequently result in over-simplification and therefore half-truths or too much detail in an attempt to be really clear and cover every aspect, which is a turn-off for the majority of learners; for the less able it is inaccessible; for the more able some of the extra detail may be beyond their capability at the time, causing them to be confused and maybe think they have not understood any of the idea.

When teachers feel the need to give notes for guidance, explanations that had been given in English in class (see 'Focus on form' section) could be noted in English with target language examples of use and English translations of the examples. Since this is likely to be on complicated issues such as tense usage it is reasonable to assume that, at this stage, learners will think what they want to say in their mother tongue first, so it is important that different English translations are made available. Where focus on form in class had involved demonstration and exemplification in target language, maybe just the exemplification, with an English translation if necessary, could be noted - no long-winded explanation; instead just the diagrams, flow charts, tables, colour-coded endings, 'mathematical formulae' or whatever had evolved in class in the 'collaborative sense-making' process.

To stop unnecessary and lengthy English notes, the rule once agreed by the class, can be written with the most important areas highlighted and then examples given from the contexts covered, e.g.

weil + Verb am Ende

ich wohne gern in Southampton, weil es viele Geschäfte gibt

and/or ich gehe gern in die Schule, weil ich viele Freunde da habe

As a summary maybe certain persons of a verb could be written out e.g. 1st-3rd persons singular of the present tense in Year 7 after 1st person has been practised for hobbies, 2nd person for surveys of the class and 3rd person for the reporting back of the survey findings. Verbs will have been experienced 'horizontally' during the learning process, i.e. focus on 1st person of several verbs initially, not 'vertically', i.e. whole paradigm of one verb, (see Wicksteed 1991) but more able learners may appreciate the overview of 1st-3rd persons singular as a summary. It would not be helpful at this stage to write out the whole paradigm if the remaining persons had not been met.

Less able learners who are learning grammar more implicitly and concentrating

principally on understanding through listening, communicating through speaking and on learning through regular revisiting of their limited structures may not require many notes or find them helpful, although sentence-building boxes are useful. More able learners who are being encouraged to become more independent language users may wish to make their own notes, in whatever way serves them best, throughout the learning process, which they can then verify at the end of the cycle with everyone else. If they do this, it is best done at specific reflection times, e.g. at home or in the few minutes after completion of a task while they wait for the class to catch up, not when they are supposed to be directly involved in the interaction that is taking place in the lesson.

Learning styles and strategies.

The notes made by learners themselves or with their teachers can be a valuable support when practising or creating new language, possibly their most valuable resource. The modern coursebooks offer tips and sentence-building boxes on almost every page, as well as reference support on grammar worksheets and in the grammar section at the back of the book. Key Stage 4 textbooks include exercises on dictionary usage, a few tips on learning strategies and grammar manipulation exercises. Up - to - date dictionaries themselves include much reference support. When meeting in a new context a rule which has previously been discovered, teachers may put a simple note in the corner of the board as a helpful reminder. Learners can be allowed access to this type of support to aid accurate production but it is more suitable for written production, rather than oral. It can easily intrude on their learning and inhibit their spontaneity of speech.

It must be remembered that teaching does not equal learning. Just because a teacher has covered a structure implicitly or explicitly does not mean that the learner has learnt it. Even if the teacher checks that the learner has understood the idea, it still may not mean that the learner has learnt and internalised it. Heafford (1993) states that 'teachers should not equate teacher presentation and learner understanding with learner assimilation' and Wicksteed (1991) that 'Pupils must learn the grammar rather than be taught it'. However teachers must not assume that learners, even able ones, automatically know how to learn.

Some time at the beginning of the academic year could usefully be devoted to talking explicitly with each new class, at least in Key Stage 3, about their learning strategies so that good ideas are shared and learners have access to more strategies

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(see Harris [1997], Fleming and Walls [1998]). Time needs to be set aside in the departmental scheme of work for this and a focus highlighted for each year group. Learners must attempt to monitor and evaluate their strategies so that they discover what is best for them. All suggestions are valuable and worth consideration. Learning styles will differ in any class; no style is 'wrong'. Different styles of learning will require different learning strategies and different teaching styles. Learners need to be explicitly aware of their own learning styles and most effective learning strategies so that they have some ownership of their learning, so that they are involved and their involvement is valued. Teachers must vary their teaching styles according to the learners in front of them. As Naiman (1978) points out: 'teacher-centred approaches are believed to have little or no effect when they are in conflict with the learners' interest and learning strategies'. The involvement of the learner is vital to maintaining interest and motivation and to the successful acquisition and production of the target language.

Revisiting, refinement and extension.

Constant revisiting of structures in new contexts is an important part of the learning process. Learners should not feel bored because they have 'done it all before' but excited that they can recall successfully what they have learnt and realise its value by applying it in a new situation. In order for teachers to be successful, they must realise where their learners are, in a non-judgemental way, and move them on to where they are not. High value language particularly needs regular recycling with different aspects added to it so that refinement of ideas and of the bigger chunks of language can take place and the learners can extend their range of structures and the complexity of their language in order to understand more fully a wider range of spoken and written language and to produce accurate language for their own personal use and in a variety of different styles. Revisiting, refinement and extension are important for the less able to consolidate their limited language and move it forward in a controlled and gradual way (what they can do must never be underestimated) and to give the more able the freedom to fly.

In order for there to be sensible revisiting and progression, (not inconsistency and ad hoc decisions), both within each key stage and across the two key stages, a department must plan extremely carefully. Grammar should be an integral part of the scheme of work, showing where features fit best alongside contexts, all types of resources including ICT and timings. A methodology section should be included in a department handbook, if not in the scheme of work. A detailed overview of the

grammar in each key stage is necessary, bearing in mind that key stage 4 is mostly a refinement and extension of points met in Key Stage 3. Such an overview needs to show where ideas are first met, where they are reinforced, where aspects are added and where emphasis is placed for each year group (see Figure 1). The overview would be applicable to all learners, but whether the grammar was experienced implicitly or with an explicit focus, for comprehension or production purposes would have to be decided by individual teachers for their classes. To help with this decision, for Key Stage 3 at least, (the initial cycle of language learning), there should be a table showing the language relevant to that year group, based on the most appropriate resources, left as chunks of meaning, partially broken down or totally broken down into the component parts of speech. Teachers can highlight their path through the detail provided in this at - a - glance way, ensuring reinforcement, refinement and extension and taking different combinations, if necessary, to suit the needs of the learners in a particular class.

A place for grammar in the four skill areas.

Grammar is perhaps not so readily associated with the receptive skills of listening and reading but without knowledge and understanding of how a language works learners will not be able to make the best sense of what they are hearing and seeing. A knowledge of vocabulary only will not get them far and may cause them to make wild, inaccurate guesses. Looking at sentence structure is part of training them how to listen and read. As much exposure to the target language as possible, including the teacher's proficient-user language, helps the learners to have the more global view of the language system which is necessary for listening and reading comprehension and which includes looking at different types of text, making inferences and realising what feelings are being expressed. Examination of the language at a sentence or sub-sentence level helps more with the productive skills, particularly writing.

Grammar is more readily associated with the productive skills of speaking and writing. In speaking, communication of the meaning must be the prime concern and wrong sentence structure does not always interfere. Native speakers are frequently 'ungrammatical' when they speak, as they hesitate, change tack or leave utterances unfinished. An utterance that has been made with some knowledge of the structure of the language, however imperfect, will convey more than one with no knowledge.

The grammar needs to have been experienced, but not at the expense of fluency.

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More able pupils, who have probably been more involved with explicit focus on form, find it helps to give them the freedom to create, as well as allowing them to be more accurate, particularly in writing.

At present, in a climate of Modern Languages for All, writing makes up a quarter of the G.C.S.E exam. The exam syllabus drives the Key Stage 4 curriculum so everyone has to practise writing when, in fact, it has very little relevance to some learners. Will there be a time when writing is not a compulsory component of a still valid and valued exam and the teaching and learning of grammar can be adjusted?

A departmental approach.

There are certain influences which will determine how an individual teacher operates that are within their control: their own knowledge and understanding of grammar, of the target language and of current academic research and issues in modern languages' teaching. Which learners are in front of them at the time is outside their control but will also exert an influence. The department is subject to influences in the same way. Within its control is the choice of a coursebook and decisions on departmental policies but it must also operate under the constraints of National Curriculum and G.C.S.E requirements and the time made available in the school for the study of modern languages.

Since the learners in a large school are likely to meet a different teacher each year, at least for the first four years, and since grammar is an important component of language learning, it is vital that the approach to the teaching and learning of grammar is consistent across the department. The enthusiasm of the teacher and their love of the subject should always come across to the learners. Praise should play a principal role so that a culture of success is built up which, in itself, is motivating and leads to further success. Challenge is the other vital ingredient. Whilst respecting where the learners are and what they can do, the teachers should try to motivate them further and move them on by making appropriate challenges. One certain way is to focus on form appropriately and do so in the target language: challenging content and challenging medium. Bringing the two together and having that as a departmental target should raise the standard of all learners.

The department must decide together what the different learners are going to experience in the way of grammar, when, how and for what purpose, and then carry it through consistently. If form and function succeed in coming together, could that

be 'communicative grammar'?

So what can the department do now?

The department could address the following questions in pairs, groups or all together on an INSET day so that there is a consistent approach which would best fit the needs of their learners. The discussions could result in a short policy statement, a complete target language list/overview or simply clarification of thought and the way forward after detailed discussion of an example.

a)Which grammar points are appropriate for each year group?
b)Is there progression and refinement over KS3 and KS4?
c)How can the language best be broken down for a particular type of group?
d)What constitutes 'high value' language?
e)How can language be modified to suit the learner's needs?
f)Which features can be left as implicit?
g)Which grammatical terms are the departmental going to use?
h)Which points (if any) need to be explained?
i)What target language will be needed to focus explicitly on a particular point?
j)What form will corrective feedback take a) for oral work and b) for written work?
k)How will rule discovery be handled?
l)How and when will grammar be noted by the learners?
m)What place will explicit work on learning strategies have in the scheme of work?
n)What place will bi-lingual dictionary usage have in the scheme of work?

Conclusion.

I have discovered that grammar does have a place in the communicative approach, that it is both desirable and necessary to make some grammar explicit to German beginners and to more able learners in Year 8 upwards, and that it is possible to do it virtually all in target language. When the two come together perfectly, it is possible to marry form and function.

Ideas in certain sections of this paper (keeping form second to meaning, chunks or breakdown according to differing needs, modified language, high value language, explicit form on focus but demonstration not explanation, total or virtually total

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target language, minimal use of grammatical terminology, learners spotting rules and constant revisiting, refinement and extension) have been monitored, reviewed and evaluated over three years with Year 7 mixed ability classes and more able learners in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 in German. This was done as an on-going process by me, and, more objectively and in more detail but only on a few occasions, during snapshot, single lesson observations made by senior colleagues, appraisers and inspectors. The experience was found to be challenging for both teacher and learners, with all learners fully involved, enjoying learning and a real sense of progress and success with clear expectations made of them. It was agreed that these learners needed and appreciated explicit grammar focus and that it is possible to achieve nearly any end through the target language in the classroom.

A certain lack of success with some aspects of methodology combined with my reading on current theory and research have caused me to change emphases in this paper in some sections of methodology, most notably 'corrective feedback' and 'grammar notes made by learners'. These need to be tested further. Discussion of learning styles and strategies is a new addition and also needs to be monitored.

The next step now is to look in detail with the department at the proposed overview of German grammar for Key Stages 3 and 4, to try to come to a better understanding of when the language chunks need to be broken down for different learners and to decide on appropriate methodologies so that consistency across the department is evident to all teachers and learners. All levels of ability would then gradually be included in the approach.

Further monitoring of the teaching and learning needs to take place. It would be more helpful for objective monitoring to be done by colleagues whenever possible.

Progress of particular learners over a period of time, measured properly by researchers, and the learners' perceptions of their language learning experience also have an important part to play and that aspect certainly needs much more careful attention. The departmental policy, arrived at and agreed by all, has to support individual teachers to allow them to enable effective learning to take place in their classroom.

Once the principles have been agreed and decisions made on the way forward for German at all levels throughout the two key stages, the whole process must be repeated for French.

Grammar has a rightful place in the communicative approach; language teachers and learners need to work together to find the best way to marry form and function, but total or virtually total use of target language is a step in the right direction.

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